



Harford County Health Department Division of Food Control



Standard Operating Procedures *A Healthy Environment for Healthy People*

January 2010

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

CRITICAL ITEMS (1 – 9)

Critical Items are food safety requirements which must be followed to reduce the incidence of food-related illness and injury. If a critical food safety violation is discovered, it must be corrected immediately or the facility is closed until the violation is corrected. The **Critical Items** are as follows:

Food Sources and Protection (Items 1 - 2)

Items 1- Food Source

- Food shall come from an approved source, e.g. a licensed manufacturing plant.
- Food shall not be prepared in private homes.
- Bakery products shall be prepared by a licensed manufacturer.
- Canned food products shall come from an approved commercial source.
- Shellfish and crabmeat shall come from licensed commercial fishermen and picking plants.
- The USDA shall inspect meat, meat products, poultry, and poultry meat products.
- Milk, milk products, frozen desserts, egg products, and dry eggs shall be pasteurized.
- Eggs that are cracked or broken shall not be used.
- Eggs shall come from licensed egg farms.
- Facilities shall use pasteurized egg products when preparing dishes that do not reach 155°F.

Item 2- Food Protection

- Food shall be protected from contamination, spoilage, and adulteration.
- Food that is spoiled, contaminated, or not in sound condition is unacceptable for use.
- Ready-to-eat food shall be protected from cross-contamination from raw food by people, equipment, and surfaces.
- Severely dented, swollen, rusted, or leaking cans can not be used or sold.
- Food may not be stored in garbage bags or plastic grocery bags. Food may only be stored in plastic bags that are made from food grade plastic.

Employee Health and Hand Washing (Items 3 - 4)

Item 3 – Food Workers with Infection Restricted

- Individuals with communicable diseases, sores, boils, or diarrhea shall not handle food.

Item 4 – Hand Washing

- Food handlers shall properly wash hands and exposed arm areas with soap and warm water. Lathering should last at least 20 seconds, and drying shall be done with disposable towels or an air dryer.
- Hands shall be washed after performing tasks which will soil the hands, such as, but not limited to, the following: mopping, handling soiled dishes, handling raw food,

handling garbage, smoking, using the restroom, and touching soiled surfaces such as refrigerator door handles.

Potentially Hazardous Food (Items 5 – 7b)

Item 5 – Cooling: Time and Temperature

- Food shall cool from 135° - 70°F within 2 hours and from 70° - 41°F within an additional 4 hours.
- Ready-to-eat potentially hazardous foods for cold service, such as tuna salad, shall be cooled to 41°F within 4 hours.
- Adequate refrigeration shall be provided to ensure the proper cooling of all food prepared on site.

Item 6a – Cold Holding: Temperature

- Cold food shall be held at or below 41°F during storage.
- Pasteurized crab meat and smoked fish shall be held at or below 38°F.
- Cold food shall not exceed 41°F for more than 2 hours while on display or during preparation. Time period must be verifiable.
- Potentially hazardous bakery products shall be held at or below 41°F unless otherwise stated by the manufacturer.
- Severely overcrowded or makeshift facilities for storage, display, and serving of hot and/or cold food shall be avoided.
- Adequate storage, display, and serving equipment shall be provided for all cold food on the menu.
- It is recommended that the temperature of each cold holding unit be monitored at opening, midday, and at closing.
- Refrigerated units shall maintain proper temperature at all times.
- Thermostats shall be appropriately set to maintain required cold food temperatures.

Item 6b - Hot Holding: Temperature

- Hot food shall be held at or above 135°F during storage, display, or transport.
- Severely overcrowded or makeshift facilities for storage, display, and serving of hot food shall be avoided.
- Adequate storage, display, and serving equipment shall be provided for all hot food on the menu.
- It is recommended that the temperature of each hot holding unit be monitored at opening, midday, and at closing.
- Heated units shall maintain proper temperature at all times.
- Thermostats shall be appropriately set to maintain required hot food temperatures.

Item 7a – Cooking: Time and Temperature

- Poultry, stuffing, stuffed meats, stuffed pastas, and stuffed seafood shall be cooked to an internal temperature of 165°F for a minimum of 15 seconds.
- Comminuted fish and meat products, and shell eggs (not for immediate service) shall be cooked to an internal temperature of 155°F for a minimum of 15 seconds.
- Roast beef served rare shall be cooked to an internal temperature of 130°F for a minimum of 121 minutes.
- Raw animal foods cooked in a microwave oven shall be cooked to 165°F for 15 seconds.

- All other raw potentially hazardous food shall be cooked to an internal temperature of 145 °F for a minimum of 15 seconds.
- Fruits, vegetables, and commercially processed food for hot holding shall be cooked to 135°F.
- Properly designed heating equipment shall be provided. Heating food on a hot holding device is unacceptable.
- Health care facilities shall not serve raw or undercooked animal food.

Item 7b – Reheating: Time and Temperature

- Leftover foods shall be rapidly reheated to an internal temperature of 165°F. Rapid reheating means within 2 hours.
- Properly designed reheating equipment shall be provided. Reheating food on a hot holding device is unacceptable.

Water and Sewage (Items 8 -9)

Item 8 – Portable Hot and Cold Running Water

- The water supply shall be approved and potable.
- The Health Department shall be notified immediately of a bad bacteriological water test result.
- Ice shall come from an approved source.

Item 9 – Sewage Disposal

- Wastewater and sewage shall be discharged to an approved sewage disposal system.
- A sewage malfunction that results in a back-up into the food service facility presents an imminent health hazard. The facility shall close until the system is repaired and the area is properly disinfected. The Health Department shall be notified immediately of a sewage backup into the facility.
- The grease interceptor shall be maintained to prevent sewer discharge or system malfunction. The unit shall be inspected every three (3) months and pumped as often as is necessary. The pumping contract and service records shall be available upon request.

GOOD RETAIL PRACTICES (10 - 33)

Good Retail Practices (GRP's). GRP's are preventative measures to control the introduction of pathogens, chemicals, and physical objects into foods. Facilities found in violation of GRP's are not routinely closed. Instead, compliance within 30 days, or within a timeframe specified in a written compliance schedule, is required. The GRP's are as follows:

Food Temperature Control (Items 10 – 13)

Item 10 - Thawing Methods

- Food shall be thawed by one of the following methods:
 - Inside a refrigeration unit at 41°F or below;
 - Under cool running water not to exceed 70°F;
 - In a microwave oven immediately prior to cooking; or
 - As part of the conventional cooking process.

Item 11 - Cooling Methods

- Soups and gravies shall not exceed 3 inches in depth during cooling.
- Ice baths, cooling wands, or blast freezers may be used in the cooling process.
- Solid leftovers, such as meats (roasts) and lasagnas, shall be cut into four pound or less pieces.

Item 12 - “Time-only”: Procedures and Record Keeping

- Only those food items approved by the Health Department shall be held using “time-only” controls.
- Requests for using “time-only” controls for foods shall be submitted to the Health Department for approval.
- Procedures for marking or identifying foods held using “time-only” control shall be used. Markings shall indicate the time by which food is to be either used or discarded.
- “Time-only” procedures are not approved for use in a health care facility.

Item 13 - Thermometers Provided and Accurate

- All refrigeration units shall be provided with a thermometer. This thermometer shall be located in the warmest part of the unit and shall be calibrated in 2°F intervals.
- Hot holding units shall also be provided with thermometers.
- A metal stemmed thermometer, graduated in 2°F intervals, shall be available for obtaining food temperatures.

Food Identification (Items 14 – 15)

Item 14 - Labeling Accurate, Truthful, Date

- Food shall be properly labeled.
- Secondary food storage containers must be properly labeled unless readily identifiable. (Label can be on lid if lid is permanently attached to bin).
- Out of date milk and dairy products shall not be sold or used. (Exception – Milk that is to be consumed on the premises can be used for up to 4 days after the stamped date).
- Out of date bakery products shall not be sold or used.
- Fresh baked products such as custard filled pies that are allowed to be stored at room temperature shall not exceed a three day sell-by date.

- Vendable food shall be labeled to indicate the need for refrigeration.

Item 15 – Required Records Available: Shellfish Tags, Egg Records

- Shellfish shall not be accepted without shellfish tags attached.
- Shellfish tags shall be held for Health Department review for at least 90 days.
- Invoice records for eggs shall be held for Health Department review for at least 90 days.

Prevention of Food Adulteration, Spoilage and Contamination

Item 16 – Adulteration, Spoilage and Contamination Prevention Practices

- Cases of food, including soda and beer, shall be stored off the floor.
- Food shall not be stored in locker rooms, toilet rooms, dressing rooms, garbage rooms, or mechanical rooms.
- All packages of food shall be intact. If the packaging is damaged, contents may be transferred to a closed container if the food product has not been compromised or contaminated.
- Food cannot be stored under plumbing lines.
- Food cannot be stored in ice used for drinks.
- Ice bins located in a bar area shall be protected with a cover.
- Containers of food (ie. milk cartons) that are stored in drained ice shall have the lip contact surfaces above the level of the ice.
- Open containers of food intended for self-service shall be under a food guard.
- Condiments dispensed from open containers shall have lids or be kept under a food guard.
- Open containers of food shall be stored at least 18 inches above the floor.
- Reconstituted milk can only be used for cooking or baking.
- Food shall be shipped in closed containers.
- Hoses of bulk milk dispensers shall not exceed 1/2 inch in length.
- Frozen food shall be held in a frozen state.
- Food in refrigerated display cases shall not be stacked above the display lines (load limit).
- Food in storage shall be kept in closed containers or covered with food grade materials, except while cooling on the top shelf of a refrigeration unit.
- Food that has freezer burn shall not be served.
- Cloth towels shall not be used to cover food.
- Milk for service to customers shall be served in the original sealed container or from a bulk milk dispenser.
- All fruits and vegetables shall be washed before being served or cooked.
- Unwrapped food (e.g. butter, coffee cream, rolls and bread) that is put out for service shall not be returned for re-service.

Item 17 – Personal Cleanliness

- Employee outer garments shall be clean.
- Fingernails shall be kept neatly trimmed and clean.
- Unless wearing gloves that are good repair, food handlers shall not wear nail polish or artificial nails.
- Except for a plain, smooth ring such as a wedding band, “hand” jewelry is restricted.
- Long hair shall be restrained.

- Employees shall not eat, drink, or use tobacco while working, except in approved break areas. Employees are permitted to drink from a properly covered beverage container in food preparation and utensil washing areas.
- When taste testing food, appropriate clean and sanitized utensils must be used each time.

Item 18 – No Bare Hand Contact with Ready-to-Eat Foods & Proper Utensil Use

- Employees shall use utensils or disposable gloves to handle ready-to-eat foods. Bare hand contact with ready-to-eat-food is strictly prohibited.
- Scoops used in food shall have handles.

Item 19 – Adequate Hand Washing Facilities Supplied & Accessible

- Hand sinks shall not be blocked.
- Hand sinks shall be supplied with soap, paper towels, and a waste receptacle.
- Hand sinks shall remain clean at all times.
- Hand sinks must not be used for any other purposes except hand washing.

Item 20 – Toxic Substances: Use, Storage, Labeling

- Materials that come in contact with food shall be non-toxic. The following items shall not be used:
 - Garbage bags,
 - Galvanized metal cans and plastic trash receptacles,
 - Leaded plates and pitchers, and
 - Enamel pots and pans,
 - Plastic grocery bags.
- The following materials shall be stored separately from each other, and from food and food contact surfaces:
 - First aid kits/medications,
 - Cleaning agents,
 - Toxic chemicals.
- All containers of chemicals and cleaning agents shall be properly labeled as to content.

Item 21 – Wiping Cloths: Properly Used and Stored

- Wiping cloths used on food contact surfaces shall be stored in sanitizer between uses. (50 parts per million (ppm) of chlorine (or bleach), or at a concentration indicated on the manufacturer's label for quaternary ammonium chloride (QAC). The use of sponges on food contact surfaces is prohibited.

Item 22 – Insects, Rodents, and Animals: Not Present, Control Means

- A facility must be free of insects, rodents, birds, and other animals with the exception of service animals.
- Food service facilities should maintain a contract with a licensed exterminator for periodic inspections.
- All doors to the outside shall be self-closing and tight fitting.
- Windows and doors, which are left open for ventilation, shall have screens. Screens shall be in good repair.
- Fly strips shall not be located above open food or food preparation areas.

- When installed above food preparation areas, fly “zappers” and approved automatic insecticide dispensers shall maintain a horizontal separation of at least 8 feet from food contact and preparation areas. “Zappers” may be installed closer than 8 feet when installed below food contact surfaces.
- Ultraviolet light bulbs in insect traps should be replaced in the spring.

Utensils and Equipment – Design, Installation and Storage (Items 23 -26)

Item 23 – Single-Use/Single-Service Articles: Use, Storage, Dispensing

- Single use and single service items shall not be reused. Some examples are bread wrappers, aluminum pie pans, paper/plastic tableware or flatware.
- Single service flatware shall be stored such that only the handles are exposed during service.
- Single service plates, bowls, and cups shall be protected during service and storage.
- Single service and single use items shall not be stored in toilet rooms.
- Single use items shall not be made of toxic materials.
- Boxes of single use and single service items shall not be stored opened or on the floor.

Item 24 - Food-Contact Surfaces and Equipment: Cleaned and Sanitized, Storage

- Food contact surfaces and splash zones shall be cleaned and sanitized daily or more often as needed.
- Storage of tableware under sewerage lines is prohibited.
- Utensils, dishes, glassware, pots and pans shall be air-dried. Towel drying is not permitted.
- Pots and pans shall be fully air dried before stacking. “Wet nesting” is not permitted.
- Exposed tableware shall be stored at least 18 inches off the floor.
- Utensils shall be stored with handles facing in one direction.
- Scoops shall not be stored in ice making machines, unless unit is equipped with an approved holder.

Item 25 – Food-Contact Surfaces and Equipment: Properly Designed, Constructed, and Used

- Each compartment of a three compartment sink shall be large enough to accommodate the largest piece of equipment to be washed.
- All equipment shall be approved by the Health Department prior to its use.
- All equipment must be properly designed to meet commercial standards. Domestic or household equipment is not permitted.
- Cutting boards shall be maintained with smooth surfaces.
- All equipment shall be properly maintained and in good repair.
- It is recommended that icemakers be de-limed and cleaned a minimum of every three (3) months.
- Equipment and utensils shall be smooth, easily cleanable, and free from cracks and crevices.

Item 26 – Warewashing Facilities: Installed, Maintained, Used, Test Strips

- Three compartment sinks shall be set up and properly used, with a wash, rinse, and sanitize procedure. Water shall be changed when dirty, cool to the touch, or when sanitizer level falls below the proper concentration.
- Mechanical dishwashers shall be cleaned daily or more often as necessary.

- Automated dispensers for chemicals shall be installed properly and maintained in good order, and shall not be located over clean dish tables.
- Mechanical dishwashers shall have proper pressure gauges and thermometers, and they shall be in good working condition.
- Chemical test kits for sanitizer of choice shall be available, and shall be appropriate for the chosen sanitizer.

Physical Facilities (Items 27 – 31)

Item 27 – Garbage/Refuse Properly Disposed: Facility Maintained

- Waste receptacles and dumpsters shall be kept clean and in good repair.
- The dumpster lids and side doors shall be closed at all times.
- The dumpster storage area shall be kept clean and free of litter and debris.
- The garbage removal schedule shall be adequate to prevent overflow.
- The dumpster and grease barrel shall be located on an impervious and cleanable surface.
- Measures shall be implemented to control dumpster odor such as bagging of waste, sanitizing the interior of the dumpster, and replacing the unit when it is no longer cleanable.
- The grease barrel and surrounding area shall be kept free of an accumulation of grease.
- Liquid waste from the dumpster shall be contained.

Item 28 - Plumbing Installed: Proper Backflow Devices- Plumbing-Sinks and Other Fixtures

- With the exception of handsinks, mop sinks and garbage disposals, all food service equipment with drain lines shall indirectly drain to an approved point of discharge.
- All indirect waste lines and condensate lines shall have air gaps. This means the end of the drain pipe is cut off above the rim of the floor sink or hub drain.
- Indirect drain lines and condensate lines shall not be manifolded together. Each line shall independently drain to a floor sink or hub drain.
- Faucets and pipes shall not leak.
- Equipment, when emptied, shall not drain onto the floor. The diameter on drain pipes may need to be decreased in order to meet this requirement especially on two and three compartment sinks when all vats are emptied at the same time.
- Hot and cold water under adequate pressure shall be provided at all sinks.
- Backflow preventors shall be installed on all pieces of food equipment which have a water connection. Vacuum breakers are no longer acceptable on equipment with shut off or celloid valves, eg. ice makers or coffee makers.
- Plastic or stainless steel backflow preventers are required on water lines servicing carbonators.
- Metered faucets shall be timed to run a minimum of 15 seconds.
- All plumbing shall be properly maintained.
- Backflow prevention devices shall be properly installed and functional where needed.

Item 29 – Toilet Facilities: Properly Constructed, Supplied, Clean

- Restrooms shall be kept clean and remain accessible at all times.
- Restroom doors shall be self-closing.

- Restroom handsinks shall be equipped with soap and disposable towels or a mechanical hand-drying device.
- If disposable towels are used, a trash receptacle shall be provided.
- A covered waste receptacle shall be provided in unisex and women's restrooms.
- Restroom exhaust ventilation fans shall be operational and kept clean.

Item 30 – Physical Facilities and Non-Food Contact Surfaces Installed, Maintained, and Clean

- Facility (and walk in) walls, floors, and ceilings shall be clean, in good repair, and of approved construction materials.
- Items shall be properly stored at least 6 inches off the floor to allow for adequate cleaning of the floor.
- Raw wood and unsealed concrete or brick are not acceptable materials for walls, floors, or ceilings.
- Carpet is not allowed in food service areas or restrooms.
- Dustless cleaning methods shall be utilized in food preparation areas. Corn brooms may only be used for sweeping outside areas or in an emergency situation. Push brooms may be used.
- Non-food contact equipment shall be of approved construction, clean, and in good repair.
- Milk crates, soda crates, and bread racks are not approved as shelving or storage containers.
- Bottom shelves on shelving units shall be installed 6 inches above the floor to allow for adequate cleaning.
- Non-food contact surfaces, including ventilation hoods, filters, shelving refrigerator doors and shelves, gaskets, and drawers shall be clean.
- A facility cleaning schedule detailing all non-food and food contact equipment should be in place. This schedule should include daily, weekly, monthly, etc. cleaning cycles.
- Clean linens and uniforms shall be stored in a clean area.
- Soiled laundry may be stored in a nonabsorbent container or in a washable laundry bag, provided the bag is returned to the laundry for cleaning.
- Mops, brooms, etc. shall be stored on hooks or a rack.
- The exterior of a facility shall be free of excessive litter.
- Unused equipment, miscellaneous storage items, boxes, etc. shall not be stored in the facility.
- Non-employees are not allowed in the food preparation area.
- Employee personal belongings shall be properly stored on hooks or in lockers outside of food preparation areas.
- Employee dressing/locker areas shall be maintained in an orderly condition.
- Living/sleeping quarters are not permitted in a food facility.

Item 31 – Adequate Ventilation and Lighting

- Exhaust ventilation hoods are required over cooking equipment such as fryers, grills, charbroilers, ranges/ovens, broilers, etc. Ventilation hoods may be required for steamers, pizza ovens, convection ovens, dishwashers, etc.
- Exhaust ventilation fans shall be operational and remain on while cooking.
- Exhaust ventilation and make up air fans shall be operated on one switch. Make-up air vents shall not be blocked or turned off.

- Hoods, where required, shall be capable of maintaining the area free of heat, steam, smoke, vapors, fumes, and condensation.
- Fifty footcandles of light shall be provided over all food preparation areas work surfaces, storage areas. Footcandle is simply a measurement of light intensity.
- Maximum wattage bulbs, as stated on the fixture, shall be used to assure proper lighting. This is of particular concern in walk-in boxes.
- Twenty footcandles of light shall be provided in garbage and mop sink areas, utensil washing areas, restrooms, locker room areas and all areas not subject to 50 footcandles of light.
- Light bulbs and tubes shall be shielded over exposed food and utensils.
- Light bulbs inside all refrigerators, freezers and walk-in boxes shall be shielded.
- Operational light bulbs and tubes shall be provided in all fixtures.

Miscellaneous (Items 32 – 33)

Item 32 – Required Postings: License, Choking Poster, Consumer Advisory

- A consumer advisory for raw or undercooked potentially hazardous foods shall be posted when required.
- The Food Service Facility License shall be posted in a conspicuous location.
- First Aid procedures for choking (Choking Poster) shall be posted within a food service facility.
- When customer seating is provided, a public restroom shall be provided.
- Food Safety Certification is strongly recommended for all food handlers, but especially so for managers.

Item 33 – HACCP Plan Complies with Requirements in COMAR 10.15.03

- The HACCP plan shall be updated and readily accessible to all food handlers in all high and moderate priority facilities.
- Critical Control Points (CCP's) shall be correctly identified in the HACCP plan.
- The use of temperature logs for record keeping and verification purposes is strongly encouraged but not required.